

# **IT CAN BE DONE**

Bright spots in the governance reform  
movement in the Philippines

**ALSO BY JESUS P. ESTANISLAO**

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Editor: Marielle Antonio

Associate Editors: Isabel Camus & Kirsten Ramos

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Author: Jesus P. Estanislao  
Editor: Marielle Antonio  
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# Foreword

The best antidote to cynicism  
is an example of success.

When it comes to making government institutions work, the world is awash in cynicism. Even in countries where only a few percent of people report having paid a bribe, most of the same people think their government is corrupt. Politicians and parties, in particular, are objects of derision. And there's another source of cynicism: we scorn ourselves for going along with corruption. We say our culture is corrupt. We say it would take a change of mentality to make government work—but no one knows how a country can do that.

So, examples like the ones Jess Estanislao so ably presents in this book are needed, first of all, to attenuate that cynicism.

And they also have many practical lessons for policymakers, managers, and scholars. They depict a fascinating reform movement in the Philippines. At the local and national levels, many government institutions have adopted the Performance Governance System (PGS), with demonstrated results in better service, more citizen and employee satisfaction, and reduced corruption. PGS is a version of the Balanced Scorecard, a business tool created for the private sector in the early 1990s. How PGS has adapted (and perhaps improved) the

Balanced Scorecard is of interest to scholars and practitioners of management. At a higher level of abstraction, PGS is related to many movements in public administration and anti-corruption that have tried to link planning with performance indicators and flexible management structures such as teams and task forces. Here, this book says, is how it can work.

Second, the case studies demonstrate how reforms demand more than adherence to a formula, no matter how logical and attractive the formula is. PGS does have a methodology, which was created by the Institute for Solidarity in Asia (ISA), an advocacy group that facilitates its adoption. ISA organizes “boot camps” to convey the method, as well as “master classes” for practitioners who are progressing on the PGS “pathway.” ISA also provides recognition for the fulfillment of various stages of that pathway.

But that methodology leads to flexible, contextualized results, through an admirable collaborative process.

- *Design is localized.* The creation of the local vision, mission, objectives, measures, targets, activities and projects, and

implementing teams is designed by locals to yield locally relevant results.

- *Implementation is hardly automatic; local leadership is crucial.* PGS disrupts current plans, processes, measures, and teams. Its aim is to stimulate collaboration across government departments and partnerships across the public-private-nonprofit divide, but experience shows that it is much easier to call for collaboration and partnership than to attain them. Both are built on relationships. In order to work, they require leaders to build and maintain trust, create new lines and perhaps “languages” of communication, and understand how others think and work. One can have the “formula” for change, and yet without the creative leadership to build trust, communication, and understanding, change may remain on paper only.

And so, the case studies in this book engage with classic issues of design and implementation. How can leaders help employees understand, embrace, and indeed guide change? How can governments work effectively with the business community? How can the most marginalized citizens be brought into the design and implementation of programs that affect them?

Readers should take note of two other success stories here. One is ISA itself—what an impressive and effective institution it is. In particular, business people in other countries should be inspired by this example of how they can help government work better, instead of simply decrying bad governance.

The second exemplar is Jess Estanislao. He is a success story—or better put, a whole volume of success stories himself. He has been an

exemplar leading institutions in government, development banking, and academia.

As the guiding light of ISA, he has demonstrated different brands of leadership and collaborative vision.

And as a human being, all who know him are inspired by his head and his heart, by his relentless pursuit of excellence and his equally relentless optimism and good will.

In all these ways, Jess Estanislao has shown us “it can be done.” Let us therefore resolve to put our cynicism on hold, read him carefully, and try to follow the successes he both presents and represents.

**DR. ROBERT KLITGAARD**  
**University Professor**  
**Claremont Graduate University, California**



# **WHY GOVERNANCE?**

**An introduction  
to the essentials of transforming  
government for good**

## Why governance?

In the eyes of the world, we are a sovereign nation recognized by the global community of nations since 1946.

In the eyes of history, we are a young one, still on its way to true nationhood.

When the Philippines was discovered by the explorer Ferdinand Magellan five centuries ago, we were an archipelago of barangays or very small communities cut off from each other. Conquered by Spain, we became an archipelago of municipios or small towns. Colonised by America, we were divided into larger provinces.

Today, it is the election season that brings out our regionalism.

Fortuitously, progress continues to be made and the spirit of being one people, one country under heaven, is becoming more engraved into our consciousness. May such progress continue. May it hasten.

Every day we contend with vestiges of the past. We are almost permanently in search of a great leader who can save us from our present troubles and bring us into never-ending prosperity. We are forgetful of our recent history and planners only for today and tomorrow. Worst of all, we do not seem to realize that what we do today will shape the next 50 years of our life as a nation.

All too often we are perplexed by the choices

on offer for presidential office. There is never a knight in shining armour riding to our rescue—a visionary leader with strength of character, unalterable principle, and integrity of life who can impose on us the discipline of binding together our fractious society. There is no one person we can trust to continue good policies and break down barriers to coordination.

Part of the problem is that there is no system that works for the entire nation.

We shower power, privilege, prestige, and billions of pesos on personalities and celebrities. But what about our institutions? We neglect them even when we know that their purpose is to serve the common good; to advance progress; to shape our developing nation.

It is no wonder that we are still on our way to becoming a nation—the building must continue.

Corruption is the millstone that hangs around our necks. It slows us down. It weakens us. It is the cancer that gnaws at society.

Naturally, the fight against it has become the call of the times. Unless we can remove the dead weight of corruption, we cannot

go fast nor far. We will always be left behind by others, shamed by our inability to pursue greatness because we cannot become good.

What we must understand is that this fight will not be won by adding rules and transactions to the process of making decisions, or by running endless investigations and creating entities to police corrupt officials. All these are absolutely important, yes, but they are not the cure.

Corruption is an attack on the system. It cannot be fought in bits and pieces. These efforts must be coordinated and continued over time, pursued year in and year out until the monster is vanquished and its every particle is chopped off. Then, the small things—those bits and pieces—can add up and become significant.

Smart. Systemic. Sustained. These three concepts can be captured in one word: strategic. Among others, being strategic means striking in the right place at the right time in order to make a difference. It also entails sustained effort such that it yields lasting positive results over time.

All of these that have been described so far point to governance, which always looks

many years ahead in order to see what decisions must be made today. Governance seeks to change the way the game is played, to introduce a new culture that is not concerned with winning a few battles here and there but with winning the war.

Governance is the other part of the cure—the positive side of the fight against the pitfalls of corruption.

We have proven that it works in the Philippines in national agencies and local governments that have found the will to transform themselves and form positive relationships with their stakeholders. This has resulted in ground-breaking impact, and in their being recognized as the country's inaugural Islands of Good Governance (IGG) practicing transformative management at par with global standards.

But first, old ways of thinking needed to be refreshed and change mechanisms needed to be put in place. It is these few critical steps on the road to lasting development that we in the Institute for Solidarity in Asia (ISA) wish to share with more government institutions—to give them that extra push of inspiration, and to help advance the speed and scale of reforms in the country.